

## Book reviews

**Aids and obstetrics and gynaecology.** Edited by C N Hudson and F Sharp. (£57.50.) London: Springer.

The discovery of the AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s was followed rapidly by the enumeration of the aetiology, mode of transmission and the varied clinical manifestations. Despite the vast literature that has accumulated on the subject, little attention has been focused on issues relating to women and children. Vital questions which remain unanswered relate to the risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, prevalence of HIV infection amongst women of child-bearing age as well as the management and managerial implications of HIV infection in gynaecological, obstetric and perinatal practice.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has taken a leading role in establishing a sub-committee which reported on the impact of AIDS in relation to obstetrics and gynaecology. The guidelines produced were discussed further at its 19th Study Group. This book represents proceedings from the workshop, and the editors are to be congratulated on getting the book into the press within a year of the workshop.

The majority of the contributors are distinguished scientists and clinicians, and areas covered in the book range from virology and epidemiology to the clinical management problems. The book itself is in seven sections, each containing three to five papers which have been written not as transcripts of the presentations, but as short chapters reviewing the current state of knowledge on the topic. Some include the authors' original data and all have relevant references. Edited versions of the ensuing discussion appear between the papers.

The first section on epidemiology and virology is followed by sections on natural history, clinical care and management problems relating to obstetrics, gynaecology and neonatology. The workshop also addresses the implications of HIV on health care workers. Finally the 33 conclusions made by participants at the study group are listed, laid out under 10 headings.

The papers are well-referenced but the lack of a subject index means that it is difficult to find one's way around. The discussions have been poorly edited, with many errors due to lack of clarity and transcription of the spoken word—for

example, "enteral reduction" instead of antibody production, "lumbar series" for lung biopsy, and "a protected cause" for unprotected intercourse. Proof reading was also careless—for example, lymphoid pneumocystis for lymphoid pneumonitis. The informal nature of the discussion meant that at times it bore no relation to the papers and might have been better omitted. A useful appendix is the report of the RCOG sub-committee on problems associated with AIDS in relation to obstetrics and gynaecology.

This book fills a gap in the HIV literature as it is not merely a report on a conference. Rather it contains a wealth of up-to-date information of relevance to all involved in counselling and the clinical care of HIV infected women and their babies. It acknowledges the multidisciplinary nature of the field. Data on all aspects of the AIDS epidemic are continually being collected and as knowledge increases, recommendations and guidelines may change. Nevertheless this book is essential reading to gynaecologists, obstetricians, perinatologists as well as family planning doctors.

*Jacqueline Mot*

**Counselling in HIV infection and AIDS.** Edited by J Green and A McCreaner. (Pp 331; £14.95.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific, 1989.

Green and McCreaner make it clear in their introduction that the book does not adhere to any one specific "school" of counselling and that they intend it to be helpful to anyone who is working with people who are infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), not just trained counsellors. They have succeeded admirably in that aim, covering a wide range of problems in 21 chapters. For those who are not familiar with the subject, the first four chapters, which cover counselling before and after tests for antibodies to HIV and medical and laboratory facts about HIV and AIDS, are likely to be particularly helpful. The chapter on counselling and pregnancy also sets out clearly the difficulties in advising about pregnancy, and there are chapters on drug abuse, ethical and legal issues, and paediatric infection that are likely to be helpful for medical practitioners.

Much of the information about people with AIDS (in chapter 5) applies equally to those who are infected with HIV, and in my view it is not always particularly helpful to

draw the distinction so starkly between those who are infected with HIV and those who have received a diagnosis of AIDS. One omission is the absence of mention of the role of general practitioners in caring for those who are infected. The two chapters that cover community care barely mention general practice at all, and the chapter dealing with voluntary groups is irritatingly London oriented. The current medical treatment for HIV and AIDS is not explored in any depth, which is a pity, given the increasing debate about zidovudine treatment.

Overall, however, this is an excellent and up to date account of the facts as they are currently known and the kinds of problems that present in the context of HIV and AIDS.

*Alison Richardson*

**The vulva.** Edited by C M Ridley. (Pp 376; £60.) Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1988.

The appearance of the second edition of Marjorie Ridley's book, *The Vulva* will be welcomed by all those whose work has involved the examination of this most difficult area of the female genital tract. For Dr Ridley has brought together a most distinguished group of contributors to make this a truly multi-disciplinary approach, in the best sense of the term. There is little duplication of material and the chapters can be read separately, but together they present a coherent approach to the subject.

The book opens with chapters on the embryology, anatomy and physiology of the vulva which make an excellent revision course for those who last studied these subjects some time ago. It is interesting to read of the impact which recent advances in genetics have had on our understanding of the intersexes and their genital manifestations. After a short chapter on principles of examination, Denis McCance reviews current techniques for the identification of human papillomaviruses and herpesviruses, clinical aspects of which are dealt with in the next chapter. David Oriel presents infective conditions lucidly for clinicians in other fields.

The centrepiece of the book must be Dr Ridley's own chapter on dermatological conditions. Here is an extensive range of conditions each with clear descriptions and excellent illustrations. If a fault is to be found, it is in the difficulty in distinguishing the commonplace from the rare and in the emphasis on diagnosis with little help in